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## 135 Aiken Area Council on Aging shows off its success

By **KRYSTIN MERRIWEATHER**  
Staff writer

The Aiken Area Council on Aging received a visit from the newly appointed state director during his tour of South Carolina's aging facilities.

The Lt. Governor's Office on Aging Director Curtis Loftis Jr. is on a mission to learn about the best programs that are offered in these facilities across the state and to ensure that agencies run as smoothly as possible.

"We are looking around for the best things happening in different places," said Curtis, who made Aiken his second stop.

He said the face of aging is changing and the federal government gave more money back to the state so they can better adapt to this change.

"I appreciate the spirit you guys have here," Loftis said while touring the facility. "You all do a fantastic job and I know (Andre Bauer) will be thrilled."

Loftis was impressed with the council's energy and transportation, medical assistance and nutrition programs.

"This gave us a better appreciation," he said.

Last year South Carolina received \$2.9 million for the aging network and of the funds, \$104,000 was given to Aiken County to support their home living, nutritional and transportation services, according to AACOA Executive Director Scott Murphy.

"We were able to reach out and serve new clients that we hadn't been able to support in the past," said Murphy. "We have 390 new clients benefiting from our energy assistance program."

Other programs offered by the AACOA include providing seniors with pet food, medical assistance and free meals at a site or to their homes. They also provide lawn care through Project Victory, which is a combination of efforts from the City of Aiken, Westinghouse Savannah River Co., Cedar Creek Baptist Church, Redd's Branch Baptist Church and UPS of Aiken.

During the holidays they also pay special attention to seniors with events like the Be-A-Bunny program, where they put together Easter baskets for clients.

"The volunteers look forward to taking these out as much as the seniors like receiving them," Murphy said.

In addition to the programs Loftis was able to see the renovations that have taken place at the facility, including the removal of old carpet, new paint, the reconstructed reception desk with added security doors and other much-needed modifications.

"We just gave a facelift to the property," Murphy added.

For more information on services provided by the AACOA, call 648-5447.



Staff photo by Krystin Merriweather

**Curtis Loftis Jr., the new director of the Lt. Governor's Office on Aging, speaks with Era Daniels while touring the Aiken Area Council On Aging.**